

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 26-36 are presently active in this case, Claims 26 and 32 having been amended by way of the present Amendment.

The Applicants wish to thank Examiner Kirsten Jolly for the courtesies extended to Applicants' representative, Christopher Ward, during the personal interview conducted on January 13, 2004, and a subsequent telephone interview on January 15, 2004. During the telephone interview, Examiner Jolley suggested the addition of a determining step in Claims 26 and 32 that determines for each of the different process or resist solutions a supply rate at which a uniform thickness is achieved, in order to define over the art of record. The Applicants submit that the amendments to Claims 26 and 32 define such a determining step, and thus request the withdrawal of the outstanding art rejections.

In the outstanding Official Action, Claims 26-28 and 31-34 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by, or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over Hasebe et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,658,615). Claims 29 and 35 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hasebe et al. Claims 30 and 36 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hasebe et al. in view of Akimoto et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,938,847). For the reasons discussed below, the Applicants request the withdrawal of the art rejections.

Claims 26 and 32 are considered allowable as they recite features of the invention that are neither disclosed nor suggested by the references of record.

Claim 26 advantageously recites a process solution applying method for selectively supplying different types of process solutions to a substrate in a small total supply amount, and forming a process solution film having a uniform thickness, where the method comprises, among other features, determining for each of the different resist solutions a supply rate at which a uniform thickness is achieved; storing reference data representing relationships between the process solutions and supply rates determined for the same in the storage section; selecting, by the controller, a supply system corresponding to a process solution selected from the process solutions; searching the reference data, by the controller, for a corresponding supply rate determined for the selected process solution; and driving, by the controller, the supply mechanism of the selected supply system at the corresponding supply rate.

Additionally, Claim 32 advantageously recites a resist solution applying method for selectively supplying different types of resist solutions to a substrate in a small total supply amount, and forming a resist solution film having a uniform thickness, where the method comprises determining for each of the different resist solutions a supply rate at which a uniform thickness is achieved; storing reference data representing relationships between the resist solutions and supply rates determined for the same in the storage section; selecting, by the controller, a supply system corresponding to a resist solution selected from the resist solutions; searching the reference data, by the controller, for a corresponding supply rate determined for the selected resist solution; and driving, by the controller, the supply mechanism of the selected supply system at the corresponding supply rate.

Independent Claims 26 and 32 recite methods in which different types of process solutions or resist solutions are selectively supplied to a substrate in a small total supply amount, and in which a process solution film or resist solution film is formed having a uniform thickness. These methods advantageously include a step of determining for each of the different process or resist solutions a supply rate at which a uniform thickness is achieved. The supply rates for the process or resist solutions are stored and utilized to drive the supply mechanism. As discussed during the interview, the Hasebe et al. reference does not disclose a method in which a supply rate is determined for each process or resist solution that achieves a uniform thickness. To the contrary, the Hasebe et al. reference describes a relationship between the rotational speed of a substrate and the amount of process solution applied thereto. (See, e.g. Claim 2 of the Hasebe et al. reference.) Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of the art rejections of Claims 26 and 32.

The Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 26 and 32 are allowable over the art cited in the Official Action.

Claims 27-31 are considered allowable for the reasons advanced for Claim 26 from which they depend. These claims are further considered allowable as they recite other features of the invention that are neither disclosed, taught, nor suggested by the applied references when those features are considered within the context of Claim 26.

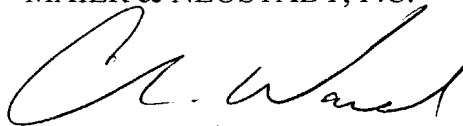
Claims 33-36 are considered allowable for the reasons advanced for Claim 32 from which they depend. These claims are further considered allowable as they recite other features of the invention that are neither disclosed, taught, nor suggested by the applied references when those features are considered within the context of Claim 32.

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Consequently, in view of the above discussion, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for formal allowance and an early and favorable reconsideration of this application is therefore requested.

Respectfully Submitted,

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